A SNUFFLY, SMELLY, SEVEN-FOOT WHAT??

Who knows what horrors lurk in the dark recesses of the Virginia woods — and what do you do when you come upon one?

By Marsha A. Capra

ON A VERY warm night in July 1965 my brother James Hudspeth and Tommy Garth, a close friend of ours, and I were camping out in a forested area between our home and the Bucknell Shopping Center off Highway 630 in Alexandria, Va. James and Tommy had insisted I go with them to the local beer joint for drinks; there they had consumed a substantial amount of the stuff. I don't drink and I didn't participate.

We returned to our camping spot around 3:00 A.M. and the three of us lay down to sleep. As a protective measure James and Tommy slept on either side of me. They soon were deep in slumber.

I remained awake, however, listening to the night sounds of crickets and frogs. But before long I too started to doze off. Just as I was about to fall asleep I heard a rasping sound. My eyes flew open and I immediately thought that someone — perhaps a dangerous person — with severe asthma had invaded our campsite.

Pretending to be asleep I slowly rolled over and groped in the darkness for our flashlight (we had no weapons). As I turned back an unbelievably foul odor hit me full force. It smelled like something that might have emanated from a dead, rotting carcass. Terrified, I nudged James and Tommy but to no avail. Apparently they were drunker than I had thought because I couldn't wake them no matter how hard I poked.

There was nothing left for me to do except take a look at the intruder. I turned my flashlight on and directed the beam to its target. What I saw then was nothing human.

Although I had aimed the flashlight for the intruder's head, I illuminated its left arm instead. But when the light touched it, it jumped to its right about a foot, then stood still facing me about 15 feet away. Slumped over but still standing seven feet tall, it was covered with long stringy gray-brown hair which hung from its body in a way that I thought resembled Spanish moss hanging from trees. It stood on two legs, its kneecaps bare, its legs bowed. Its stomach was large, round and bloated and its arms ended a few inches below the knees. Its fingers were long and slender and appeared devoid of hair.

Although I could see its head I was too frightened to shine the light into its face so I never got a look at its features. Suddenly the being moved sideways, away from me, then turned and dashed swiftly into the forest.

By this time I was waving the flashlight wildly and screaming. The screaming roused James and Tommy. When I related what I had seen they just laughed and said it must have been a raccoon. Unconvinced, I lay awake the rest of the night and was relieved when morning came and we all left camp.

For the next two months my brother continued to tease me about the incident. But one day the ridicule ceased — because he saw the strange being himself.

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IN THOSE DAYS James and I were "night owls" who liked to take drives during the early morning hours when everything is quiet and traffic is light. One warm night that September we were driving around Hollin Hills,

an upper-class area of Alexandria, Va., in a car we had borrowed from our friend Tommy. We were admiring the houses and discussing our dreams of owning fancy houses ourselves one day. The time was about 3:30 A.M.

The southern edge of the forest in which I'd seen the strange being stretched behind the houses to our right. The area in which my sighting had occurred was 15 miles north of us.

We came down a slight hill and I noticed a short dead-end street running between two houses to our right. The distance from the entrance of the street to the dead-end barricade appeared to be about 100 feet. The barricade consisted of two wooden posts with five wooden slats attached horizontally to them. Painted white, the barricade was five feet high.

Suddenly I noticed something climbing it. Looking carefully, I was astonished to discover that it was the same being I had seen before — or at least one very similar to it. Frightened as I was, I could not take my eyes off the thing because I was afraid that if I turned away I would lose sight of it.

"James, look!" I whispered.

The being, its back to us, was climbing the barricade with one leg cramped on the top slat and the other leg two to three slats lower. I could see the leg on the top slat was bent outward and the foot was gripping the slat with what appeared to be a long slender toe or thumb. I noticed that the calf of the other leg was hairless and very thin. The foot was bracing itself in the same manner as the other.

The being then raised itself so that both feet were resting on the top slat and its whole body was crouched on top of the barricade. Suddenly it sprang into the air toward the forest and into the darkness and it was gone.

I could hardly believe that I had been fortunate enough (if that is the appropriate term) to see the being twice. But as I sat there in amazement I was concerned that my brother might have missed it. Finally I asked him, "Did you see it?" He said he had.

I was relieved. Now I had a second witness and James could no longer tease me about raccoons.

Since then I have reflected often on my two sightings of these unusual beings. I have concluded that with the speed and strength these creatures (assuming that there is more than one of them) apparently possess, the first could easily have attacked and overpowered me if it had wanted to do so. Instead it chose to run into the woods.

As I watched the being the second time, I noticed it had a certain sort of human way of behaving. I thought it acted much like a child at play or an athlete who measures the distance with his eye before he high-jumps. It had not seemed to be trying to escape from us; in fact I doubt that it even knew we were watching it. It could have entered the forest by walking around the barricade but instead it climbed the barricade slowly; when it got to the top it stopped as if to check how far it could jump. I had the impression that it was playing a game. This suggests to me that not only are they nonviolent and nonaggressive but they may also be playful.

There is much else, of course, about these creatures that we don't know. I look forward to the day when we have some answers.

Jack Reitz holds the leg brace he wore for years after his leg was paralyzed from an attack of polio.

the OBJECT of SPIRIT AFFECTION

In his dream Jack's deceased grandmother said to him, "God will let you walk before He takes you home to heaven."

By Buel B. Buzzard

DID JACK Reitz's grandmother Fannie Crocker return from the world of spirit to bring him a message that would change his life? After more than 15 years of research and reflection, I have come to believe this is the best and most reasonable conclusion.

I met Jack in 1951 while I was conducting an evangelistic meeting in Lawton, Kans. At that time I had been an ordained minister in the Christian Church of Christ for 13 years and was thoroughly convinced that supernatural phenomena had disappeared with the death of the last of Christ's apostles. I believed that spiritual gifts were bestowed by God to inspire the writers of the Bible and when in about A. D. 90 John completed such inspired writings with his authorship of the *Book of Revelation,* supernatural phenomena disappeared from the world.

I often wonder what my reaction might have been if on that June night in 1951, someone had told me that 10 years in the future Jack and I would meet again — under circumstances so dramatic that I would be forced to reexamine my whole theology.

About 1944 Jack had been stricken with polio which left most of his body paralyzed. After a lot of physical therapy, however, he was able to get into a wheelchair. Then he regained the use of all of his body except his right leg which would remain, according to the best medical opinion, permanently useless. Having improved to this extent Jack began to learn to walk on crutches. Later, he heard of a brace